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ABSTRACT

A 1996 South African law vested elementary/secondary school governing bodies with formation of school policy concerning both language(s) used for instruction and those selected for second-language study. The study reported here investigated the perceptions of language teachers, principals, and governing body members on language policy, policy formation, and governing body membership. Twelve institutions were selected from three heterogeneous language areas of one region, most of them in complex and rapidly changing linguistic environments. A pilot focus group was also conducted with Durban-area teachers from a variety of schools. Results indicate that responses to demographic change among learners has been slow, particularly regarding integration of the language teaching profession and governing bodies. The proposed dual-language-medium system was seen as difficult to sustain. Schools offering Afrikaans as the only language medium have tended to isolate themselves from the integration process occurring nationally. Conflicting demands on resources for changing or maintaining schools' cultural orientation were found. Full development of indigenous languages as languages of instruction is elusive, and there is a growing perception that schools in particular areas may be dominated by governing bodies' choices of indigenous languages, constituting subtle exclusionary practice in some cases. Appended is the Department of Education Language in Education policy. Contains 14 references. (MSE)

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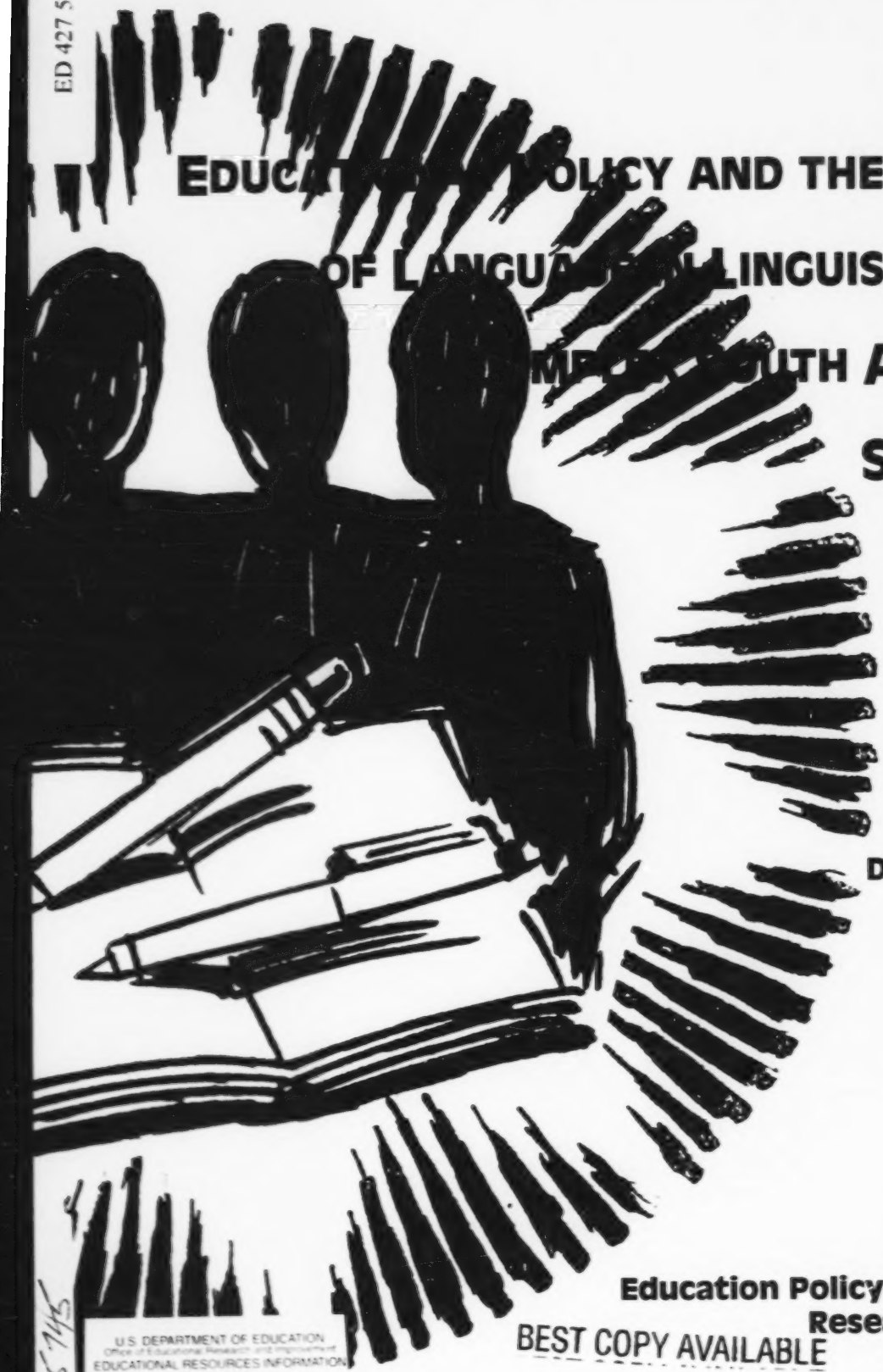

EDUCATION POLICY AND THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: LINGUISTICALLY IMPROVING SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

David Brown

Education Policy Unit (Natal)
Research Report

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EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE IN LINGUISTICALLY COMPLEX SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Formative decision-making by significant language professionals and governing bodies

David Brown

Education Policy Unit
(Natal)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South African Schools Act of 1996 vested school governing bodies with significant powers regarding the governance of their schools. One of the most important of these is the drawing up of a formal school language policy, a process involving different levels of governance in the construction and maintenance of linguistic identity in education.

Although governing body decisions on languages must be approved both nationally and provincially, the initiation of policy at local level allows for sensitivity to social and demographic environments. Facilitated by the identification of eleven 'official languages' in the Constitution, as well as the publication of guiding documents by the Department of Education (DoE), governing bodies must decide on two basic language issues. These are, the choice of languages of learning and which languages to offer as subjects and at what levels.

The study set out to assess the perceptions of language teachers, principals and governing body members on issues such as language policy and representation on governing bodies. The empirical research was conducted over one month during the current period leading up to the formulation of language policy by school governing bodies in accordance with the *Norms and standards regarding language policy in education* of 1997. Although all the schools that participated in the study had made recent *ad hoc* decisions on language policy, none of these decisions constituted a formal school level language policy as stipulated in the new legislation.

Twelve institutions were selected from three heterogeneous language areas of KwaZulu-Natal, most of them in complex linguistic environments where the sociolinguistic profile of learners was rapidly changing. In addition a pilot focus group was conducted with a group of teachers from a variety of schools, mainly in the Durban city area, who were on an outcomes-based training programme.

Some of the findings that have implications for the formulation of language policy were:

- Responses to demographic change among learners have been slow, particularly regarding integration of the language teaching profession and the constitution of the governing body.

- Schools attested to the difficulty of sustaining the parallel/dual medium system, although this model is closest to the *Norms and standards* ideal of 'additive' bilingualism.
- Schools that offer Afrikaans as the only language of learning have consolidated themselves in such a way that they have effectively isolated themselves from the process of rapid integration taking place nationally.
- There are conflicting demands on resources required to change or maintain the cultural orientation of the schools.
- The full development of indigenous languages as languages of learning remains an aspiration only. In fact, in many township schools the number of indigenous languages on offer is diminishing.
- The growing perception that schools belong to particular areas may be connected to governing bodies' choices of indigenous languages and, while legitimate, this may constitute subtle exclusionary educational practice in some instances.

Overall, the research highlights the complex relationship between indigenous languages and the dominant language. The fact that language policy is to be decided democratically and at local level has cumulative social implications that have far-reaching and, as yet, unpredictable implications for language education and educational publishing in South Africa. In addition, because there is no central language policy, the future development of indigenous languages will depend on the cumulative local patterns of decision making.

INTRODUCTION

The decision on language policy at schools is likely to be one of the most socially important that governing bodies will make in the coming years. Recent legislation gives them the new and significant role of remedying past mistakes. However, many newly-elected governing bodies face extremely difficult choices as they abandon inherited practices, as well as recent *ad hoc* responses to rapidly changing circumstances, in favour of a formal language policy for each school. The making of language policy will involve parents, teachers and, in further education, learners, in the construction and maintenance of linguistic identity. Most importantly in South Africa, this includes the accommodation of other peoples' cultural identities, rather than a simple assertion of one's own, as was fostered by past policy.

By identifying certain languages as 'official languages', the South African Constitution and, in turn, the Department of Education, are playing a facilitating role in the arbitration and formation of social and linguistic identity. Ultimately, it is governing bodies who will decide on language policy at school level. Depending on their decisions, politically sensitive forms of social, ethnic and linguistic identity will be maintained, adjusted, or changed across the country. In addition, individuals will choose the institutions and identities they wish to maintain, change, accommodate or assimilate to.

Written language forms and their distribution are arguably a key factor in the systemic construction, maintenance and change of social and linguistic identity. If we understand linguistic identity as involving the intergenerational renewal of a cultural form, the transmission of written symbolic systems is obviously an important consolidation and projection of identity, which occurs largely through organised educational endeavour (Fishman, 1991). Thus, the ways in which *written* forms of the official languages will in future be conveyed from one generation to another in South African society – such as occurrence and distribution – will be determined by the cumulative decisions of school governing bodies within each institution (Anderson, 1983).

These decisions are also central to defining social exclusion or association in local communities throughout the country. As the rules and processes for the cultural and linguistic socialisation of youth are defined, so too will parents, where choices exist, select schools to which to send their children. Language policy at school level will be a significant factor influencing parental choice of schooling.

In order to understand the difficult educational decisions that will be faced by the governing bodies, it is necessary to reflect on some of the basic concepts in the legal provisions that define the limitations and possibilities for decision-making on language in terms of the Constitution.

BACKGROUND TO THE FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING BY GOVERNING BODIES

The Guiding Documents

Governing body decisions on language policy for a specific school must be approved by the provincial authority and, ultimately, the national Minister of Education. There is essentially a three-tier policy-making process here but, very importantly, the school governing bodies initiate it. This allows for language policy to be sensitive to local social and demographic change.

Governing bodies' new powers for making decisions about the language policy for their schools derive from four documents. Firstly, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*; secondly, the *South African Schools Act (1996)*; thirdly, the nine provincial schools' acts and regulations and finally, the policy document, *Norms and standards regarding language policy in education*. This was issued on 14 July 1997 by the Minister of Education in terms of Section 6(1) of the *South African Schools Act* and gazetted in December 1997.

In accordance with these documents, governing bodies must decide two basic language issues. The first is the official language or languages of learning (that is, mediums of instruction) that will be used. The second is the languages that their schools will offer as learning areas, and at what levels (first, second or third languages). On this issue of language as learning area, choices include the official South African languages as well as, in some cases, 'foreign', community or religious languages (those approved for educational use by the department such as Arabic, Portuguese, Greek, Hebrew and Hindi) governing bodies wish to have taught in their schools.

While the official naming of, and terms for, official languages appear to be a natural process, it is important to be aware of the *constructed* nature of social and linguistic identity. The number of languages that exist, their names, status, and even the spelling of their names, were all the subject of considerable debate in the formulation of the Constitution. For example, siSwati did not exist as a separate written language before the 1960s, and sePedi was named seSotho sa Lebowa in the Interim Constitution. The spelling rules of the language names had to be carefully chosen, as there is a history of different spelling conventions in each of them. This process of naming and defining languages must be seen as a significant acceptance and shaper of 'indigenous' cultural and ethnic forms. The guarantee of official status given to languages in the new Constitution is, therefore, both inclusive and exclusive: it reflects the defining and hegemonic ethnic formation that the new democratically-elected state accepts as historically correct and currently definitive, and that it will sponsor in the future.

One constitutional lawyer classifies South Africa's language rights for the eleven languages of equal status - sePedi, seSotho, seTswana, siSwati, tshiVenda, xiTsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu - as *qualified* rights (Chaskalson,

1997).[1] What are qualified rights? Language rights in the Constitution are linked to the following founding provision in the preamble to the Bill of Rights:

> *National and provincial government may use any particular official language for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages* (Chaskalson, 1997).

These provisions indicate the importance of choice in specific social contexts. Such choices have limitations – in other words, qualifications – including 'practicality' and 'expense', which can change over time.

The interesting feature here is that the state has to accept as a 'reasonable' alternative, the provision of schools where a single language of learning is offered: in other words, it cannot insist upon more than one language of learning being provided by a school. Largely Afrikaans interests argued for this. At this stage in South African language development, Afrikaans is the only language other than English that is a language of learning throughout the educational system, from pre-school to tertiary levels.

All other language choices usually coexist with English as the language of learning. At present, 'indigenous' languages (the term used in the Constitution to denote African languages) are only available as languages of learning for the first few grades, after which they are taught as learning areas. However, the founding provisions of the Constitution (Section 6(2)) commit the state to 'elevate the status and advance the use of the indigenous languages'. Thus, their full development as languages of learning is a right *if* the political will and individual patterns of choice exist amongst the populace to develop them as such.

The *South African Schools Act* of 1996 (particularly Sections 1-6) and *Norms and standards regarding language policy in education* (1997), had to be devised with an eye to the constitutional provisions on choice and language rights. In addition, each province has a clause in its respective Schools Act (or regulations) on language policy decision-making. For educational purposes, provinces have the same powers as national government; this is referred to as a 'dual power'. Although the provincial Schools Acts differ from one another slightly, all must – and in their latest versions do – comply with the *Norms and standards* document. Therefore, this is the key document for governing bodies in their deliberations. It sets out the following norms and standards:

- Stipulates the minimum number of learners in a class which is deemed to be practical (i.e. cost effective) for official languages to be requested as languages of learning (40 for grades 1-6, 35 for grades 7-12). These figures echo the norms and standards aspiration for educator:learner ratios.
- Stipulates the minimum number of languages to be learnt as two, and at which level (e.g. first, second or third language level).

[1] The Constitution provides for a somewhat lesser degree of recognition - that the state should 'promote and ensure respect' – for community and religious languages.

- Defines educational promotion criteria attached to language: one official language as a first language to grade 9; two languages for grades 10-12, one of which is an official language. Learners can choose one language from an approved list of languages as their second language option throughout their education; the language could be a 'foreign' or community language, provided it is on the nationally approved list. (This latter point applies all the way through the education system; there is no coercion to choose any of the indigenous languages as a learning area).
- Makes allowance for learning and language disability (e.g. dyslexia) and, following the *Schools Act* of 1996, defines sign language as an official language.
- Defines language policy rights and duties of individual learners, parents, governing bodies and provincial education departments.
- Stipulates how to resolve disputes over language policy.

Balancing Individual and Group Language Rights According to Norms and Standards

The dilemma that many public schools now face is that they have experienced rapid demographic and social changes over the past eight or so years, which have brought about many more multilingual environments than existed through most of the apartheid period. (Multilingualism is defined in the new policy as the learning of more than one language and therefore includes bilingualism. It is seen as a normative feature of being South African.) Schools have had to improvise interim arrangements to the best of their ability. School governing bodies will, in future, have to declare their formal approach to the implementation of a multilingual or, at the very least, bilingual policy which encourages 'additive' bilingualism.

The *Norms and standards* policy document introduces the concepts of 'additive multilingualism' and 'additive bilingualism', the purpose of which is a well-developed overall educational competence in languages, as opposed to 'subtractive bilingualism', which takes language learning to a partial level only. The eventual aim is to improve the quality of language education by freeing it from past coercive and ethnolinguistic containment and allowing more choice in relation to linguistic identity, ability, as well as language teaching and learning methodology. Given that the amount of educational time and money spent on learning languages in South African schools is considerable, these are decisions of some importance.

Norms and standards does not stipulate which languages beyond one official language ought to be offered. Instead, its drafters have detailed how the right to the languages of one's choice in education is essentially a *qualified* right. 'Practicality' has to be considered. However, the document clearly recognises school governing bodies as key partners in the pursuit of multilingualism. It indicates that policies they devise may entail offering more than one language of learning and teaching, as well as additional languages as learning areas, thus confirming the possibilities for dual or parallel-medium schools. In addition, governing bodies may cooperate at district level in deciding policy, and could share human and other resources in order to provide adequate language teaching. They are also expected to enter the complex field of

language teaching method by choosing immersion programmes, language maintenance programmes or other approved methods. Thus, their responsibility extends well beyond choice of language.

An example of the difficulties that now have to be confronted is the large sectional desire to escape from township schools to schools, whether private or public, in which English is a language of learning from grade 1. Many such schools, even those that have not as yet been able to offer African languages as learning areas, have proved popular. A long-standing South African debate has thus been revived over the educational consequences of the choice of language of learning, particularly in the initial years. Parental choice is, however, running ahead of the debate and is turning out to be contrary to idealised perceptions of language and identity and education.

Another anomaly is to be found in historically dual/parallel-medium schools, which report a loss of learners from their Afrikaans-medium sections to Afrikaans schools with a single language of learning. Although difficult to quantify, present learner movements suggest an increased tendency consciously to consolidate, amalgamate and segregate along racial and linguistic lines into schools where Afrikaans is the sole language of learning, rather than to foster integration. This is, however, speculative and will be discussed in detail when the research is presented below.

As stated above, the language right of the learner, as exercised by the parent or guardian, is to an education in the language of learning of her/his choice, provided it is an official language. At the same time, however, parents have to accept the language policy of the school as decided by the governing body. Parents, therefore, have to find a school with the appropriate language policy for the learner and where this is not available, they can request an official language not offered by the school. For example, the parent may request that the child be taught in seSotho at a school where the only language of learning is English. Only when the number of such requests reaches forty in any of the grades one to six, or 35 in any of the grades seven to twelve, will the governing body have to reconsider the school's language provision in order to accommodate such requests.

Schools are required to submit a list of all such requests to the province. If there are less than the critical number of learners in a grade, or the governing body is unable to meet the request, the provincial education department will then have to provide learners with the language requested, or refer them to another institution. Provinces must consider equity, practicality and past discrimination in their deliberations.

Any conflict between the governing body and the provincial Member of the Executive Council (MEC) on the chosen policy may be referred to the Arbitration Foundation and the Pan South African Language Board's advice may be sought on whether there is an actionable case. Ultimately, disputes between individuals, governing bodies and provincial governments may be referred to the Constitutional Court in cases where language rights are thought to have been infringed.

The cumulative political, economic and social importance of governing body decisions should not be underestimated, and the weight of interests represented on governing bodies in sustaining the *status quo* or directing change will be felt acutely.

First, decisions involve questions of employment and social identity: will language be used as a means of social closure in employment markets, as it has been in the past? And, if not officially, will this be a *de facto* reality? Second, future decisions of the National Qualifications Framework in relation to language will inevitably influence governing body and parental choice. Third, the provision of language teachers may prove an overwhelming financial challenge. Fourth, certain industries such as publishing will be very importantly shaped by these decisions. While it is true that for the first time a market involving choice will emerge in language publishing, it must also be remembered that publishing in African languages is vitally dependent on the choices made by governing bodies; the future of Afrikaans educational publishing will be similarly affected. More particularly, if governing bodies favour specific language learning methods, they will shape the nature of published materials.

The ultimate desires of the language policy makers may well be compromised in the face of financial stringency in education for years to come. How much will be achieved by the time the ministry reviews its language policy in 1999 depends, to a large extent, on the availability of the necessary material resources (Appendix 2, p.2). A matter of considerable controversy at this point in South Africa's educational history is the ratio embedded in the *Norms and standards* document on language policy. This, like the contentious educator:learner overall ratio, is no doubt only possible if affordable.

Language Demography in South Africa: the Need for Accurate Representation

It is important to appreciate the complexity of language distribution in South Africa in order to gain perspective on the limitations and possibilities of decisions on language policy in the education system. While the demographic distribution of language in South Africa is in itself complex, language distribution in the education system presents an added complexity, as will be explained in detail below.

The principle of devolving decision-making powers is simple and based on notions of democratisation and human rights. However, the practical linguistic context into which such powers are devolved is of equal importance. Historically-held misconceptions about the links between language, identity, educational institution and territory are pervasive in South Africa and need to be thoroughly questioned. It is necessary also to be able to anticipate the trends and volatility of demographic movement in the country, so that the patterns and changing context for decisions become readily evident. Policy formulation requires minimal levels of empirical social contextualisation, such as *where* South African languages are spoken. This has to be understood in more detail; South African language data are only now emerging from a period of idealisation and consistently distorted geographic and demographic presentation.

The most influential source of data to date in South Africa has been the last two batches of census data. Two of the most significant documents in the 1990s dealing with South African language distribution are the *Language Atlas of South Africa* (Grobler, Prinsloo and Van der Merwe, 1990) based on the 1980 census data and, more recently, the *Education Atlas of South Africa* (Krige et al, 1994) based on the

1991 census data for magisterial districts. The former represents one of the final distortions of apartheid ideology and highlights all the weaknesses of previous state-sponsored research (Brown, 1997b).

The *Education Atlas*, on the other hand, is a significant attempt to move towards a reasonable empirical description of language distribution. However, according to initial data from the 1996 census, the 1991 census was flawed. The interim report of the former, in June 1997, shows that there are substantially smaller figures, seven million less in fact, for the total South African population than were previously calculated. The 1996 census was conducted in order to form a baseline for the reconstruction and development of South African society. The final report of this census is due in April 1998 (CSS, 1997) and from it will emerge the clearest picture yet of language distribution, based on a fine-grained analysis of domicile according to enumerator area.

Further complexity is added in the distribution of language in schools, coupled to a constantly shifting demography of youth in a semi-industrialised society. The economic, social and demographic movements of families and caregivers produces a rich sociolinguistic and ethnic diversity in South Africa and determines the period of time that scholars are likely to spend in any one institution. For a substantial proportion of such young people, it is difficult to sustain a consistency of attendance in a single institution in a specific area for their educational lives. As a result, a significant proportion of South Africa's learners will face a situation where their home language is not on offer in the schools they attend. They will find themselves constantly in situations where new languages are on offer in the institutions in which they are currently enrolled, thus making flexibility and tolerance essential in the way institutions frame their policies. Many learners emerge from multilingual families who, through intermarriage, have command of a number of languages and no specific desire to consolidate an identity in any one linguistic group (Pirie, 1984).

The choice of school by parents will be influenced by the languages on offer and interrelates with the choices made by governing bodies. Cumulatively and collectively, such decisions will readjust the ethnography of South African schools.

THE STUDY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Rationale

The rationale for this study was to assess perceptions of a selected group of language teachers, principals and governing body members from complex sociolinguistic contexts. Because of its key vested interest in the maintenance or change of language policy, the formative advocacy and opinions of the language teaching profession were sought on issues such as language policy and representation on governing bodies.

The initial hypothesis was that the vested interests and historical practices of the language teaching profession would have considerable influence on decisions and

could represent a crucial barrier to, or support for, rational change in the interests of the learners and their communicative context.

The second hypothesis was that the complexity of many of the contexts could, in the final analysis, produce arbitrary choices and that not all learners could be accommodated in all contexts. A further hypothesis was that language policy was crucial to defining the social and cultural identity of each school, primarily by choice of the language of learning and secondly in the choice of languages as learning areas. These choices were assumed to have socially exclusive or inclusive consequences.

Assumptions and Limitations

This research was undertaken during the period leading up to a formal decision by the governing bodies on language policy in accordance with the *Norms and standards* document. The contents of this document, as noted above, were announced in a policy document in July 1997 and published in the Government Gazette in December 1997, in accordance with national and provincial Schools Acts. It is important to explain the timing here, as it impinged directly on this research project. The final policy details of *Norms and standards* had originally been scheduled for March 1997 but were delayed until July 1997, when they appeared in the form of a ministerial policy statement. The final gazetting only occurred six months later, at which point field trips were planned.

The study was initially undertaken in the hope of finding an informed set of respondents with a sense of their own vested professional interests who, in addition, understood the implications of the new provisions for decision-making at school level. It was further hoped that governing bodies would be on the verge of making formal decisions on language policy. While there was considerable debate on language policy in all the chosen sites of research, it was clear that governing body decisions would be delayed well into 1998. As a result, only a few of the respondents in the focus groups were as well-informed as was initially assumed in the original conceptualisation of the study. The research was, therefore, conducted in a period that was more formative than had been anticipated during the latter part of 1997. While this changed the way in which the research was approached, it does not, in essence, detract from the findings. If anything, the flux of this period has produced anxieties that have been deeply revealing of the potential social conflicts attendant on language policy decisions.

While all respondents readily expressed views on language policy and interim decisions had been taken in all the contexts researched, other factors were delaying decisions on language issues. The financial crisis and the levying of school fees took precedence in the concerns of school level governance over the introduction of even the new curriculum, and certainly over any formalisation of language policy. Given the significance of the language of learning, it was assumed that a matching degree of urgency would be felt at the level of school policy. However, this was not the case and the quantification of data on decision-making will have to be held over. The qualitative aspect of the study, however, produced a body of extremely interesting information.

Twelve institutions were chosen in KwaZulu-Natal, most of them in complex linguistic environments undergoing rapid change in their learners' sociolinguistic

profile. As explained below, the research involved the use of focus groups. When these met, in October 1997, few of the participant teachers had any detailed knowledge of *Norms and standards*, although it had been announced with much fanfare in the press four months earlier (as explained above). As a result, the focus group research included placing the provisions of the new policy before the group; sometimes this was the first time that teachers had, in fact, thought about some of the issues and the details and implications of policy. All the schools in the study had made recent *ad hoc* decisions on language policy; none of these decisions constituted formal school level language policies under the new legislation in any of the chosen schools.

The province had not, at the time of the study, set up a co-ordinated agenda to assist governing bodies to address this question. Many of the teachers, principals and governing body members expressed the view that the changes they had already made on language were sufficient and likely to be carried forward. No firm dates were being considered as to when decisions on language policy should be made, and some governing bodies were awaiting provincial guidance before addressing the issues.

The Method, Techniques and Field of Research

As a qualitative research project, the point of departure was to study schools in linguistically heterogeneous areas. The empirical research, which consisted of scheduled interviews and focus group discussions, was conducted over a period of one month by the researcher personally and not, as initially intended, with research assistants, because it was felt that the nuances and implications of the *Norms and standards* document required a well-informed discussant. Quite often, assessment and feedback on this document formed the basis of the focus group discussions and interviews. Focus groups were conducted with teachers, personal interviews with principals, and telephonic interviews with governing body members. Interviews were also conducted with language learning area specialists in a teacher training college as well as officials of the provincial department.

There was no intention in the study to seek a representative sample, or any specific quantitative assessment of the empirical investigation itself. The only quantitative empirical references are to the language demographics discussed as a background to the research. A pilot focus group was undertaken with a group of teachers from a variety of schools based primarily in the Durban city area, on an outcomes-based training programme. The teachers debated the issue of appropriate language choice and offered a wide spectrum of views based on their very different school experiences. Some language teachers were already facing redundancy or retooling as a result of the phasing out of Afrikaans in some schools, while others were firm believers in the use of English as the sole solution for the language of learning issue. In addition, there were those who believed in the full elevation of 'indigenous' (African) languages to languages of learning. Which languages should be taught as learning areas and at what levels, was also a matter of debate and discussion in the pilot focus group.

As part of the pilot study, professional teachers' organisations were sounded out on their attitudes to, and understanding of, the principles in the *Norms and standards* policy document. In particular, two key organisations were consulted, the National

Professional Teachers Association of South Africa (Naptosa)[2] and the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu),[3] each of which had one representative on the consultative committees for *Norms and standards*. A general concordance with its premises was found. The full ramifications of changes in language policy and teacher employment had not been considered in detail by these organisations at the time of the interviews, and as a result there was little sense of the complexity of decision-making likely to arise in institutions such as the ones covered in this study.

The focus groups were set up at lunchtimes and tea breaks in the respective schools. In the high schools, the focus groups consisted of language teachers; in the primary schools all the teachers participated, as there are generally no dedicated language teachers at primary school level. Principals and governing body representatives were interviewed on the premises of the school by separate appointment or, where this was not possible, by telephone. As an experiment in peripheral research technique, a number of schools were contacted nationally via the Internet to get a sense of tendencies and perceptions in a variety of schools. This was only experimental but points to a very valuable and economical possibility for research on national schools policy, particularly for the assessment of norms and standards that apply across the whole country. A growing number of schools are connected to the Internet, which will facilitate this kind of approach in future. Complex language profiles are also, of course, replicated throughout the country.

Three heterogeneous language areas of KwaZulu-Natal were selected for the study. The first was the Umzimkhulu region in Southern KwaZulu-Natal – Port Shepstone, Kokstad and Matatiele. Here, isiXhosa, isiZulu, seSotho, English and Afrikaans exist in the school environment; not on the official list of languages, siBaca is also a factor in the area.[4] Second was the northern region of Newcastle, where there is a confluence of isiZulu, seSotho, Afrikaans and English learners in the school environment. Newcastle lends the added complexity of a relatively new and significant Chinese community, in addition to the well-established Indian community. The third area was Durban, the largest urban concentration in the region, where schools in a wide variety of social settings were chosen. The research will be reported on by area as contextual explanation is of value.

The guiding factor in choosing these areas is that they represent the most complex linguistic contexts in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. In line with this overall criterion, parallel/dual medium schools were particularly included wherever possible. While this province is, on the whole, less complex than many others in South Africa, the study does serve as a reminder that environments of this kind are common in most of the nine provinces, and a defining feature of many schools in at least seven of them.

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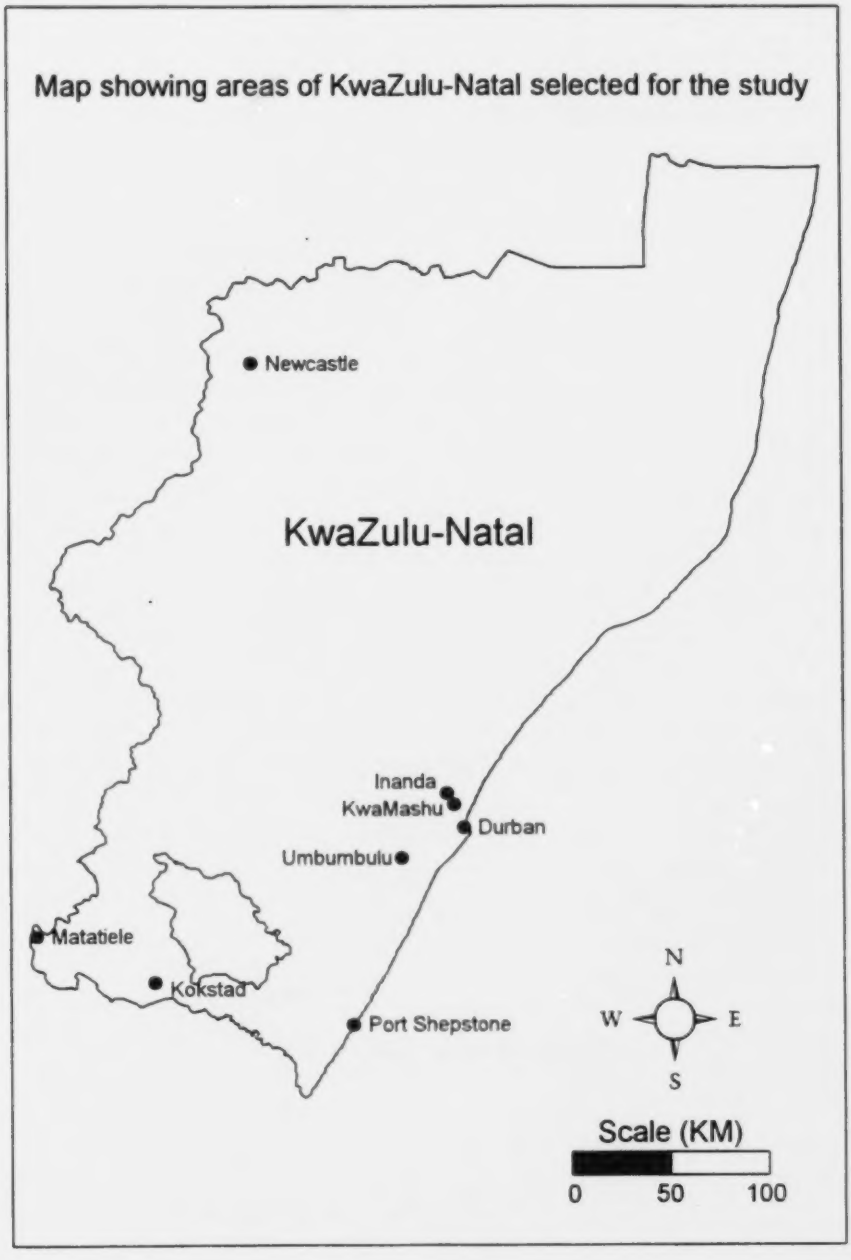
2 Interview with Naptosa representative on language policy scrutiny committee, 21 October 1997.

3 Interview with Sadtu regional secretary, 29 October 1997.

4 siBaca is a Nguni dialect proximate to isiXhosa and isiZulu, which once had its own written form. It fell into disuse for educational purposes many years ago. Learners generally face purist prejudice if they use this dialect in the classroom.


Map showing areas of KwaZulu-Natal selected for the study
Newcastle
KwaZulu-Natal
Inanda
KwaMashu
Durban
Umbumbulu
Matatiele
Kokstad
Port Shepstone
N
W
E
S
Scale (KM)
0
50
100

Newcastle Area

Newcastle High School

As a town in transition, Newcastle faces many demographic and social pressures in the context of a limited set of educational institutions. Newcastle High is the longest established, as well as the most prestigious, public school in the city and the fees set by the new governing body to sustain the quality of education on offer are the highest in the area. Newcastle High started as an English-medium school nearly a century ago and became a renowned dual/parallel medium English and Afrikaans high school over the years, gradually attracting more Afrikaans- than English-speaking learners. During the time of transition it became a 'Model C' school, enabling it to open its doors to all races. In terms of language policy, it is parallel medium for the first three years of schooling and dual medium for the final two years. In essence, this means that in the last two years of schooling, classes can switch between Afrikaans and English, as all the learners are expected to have an equal proficiency in these languages, having spent the first three years of high school learning one as a second language.

The interview conducted with the outgoing but long-standing principal revealed that the past five years had witnessed a substantial social transformation of the school.[5] He had overseen the transition to the first democratically elected school governing body. The social character of the school was still very prestigious in that it had remained popular amongst what he described as a 'relatively wealthy' section of the Afrikaans community in Newcastle, who wanted their children to acquire an adequate English education without losing their opportunity for an education in Afrikaans. The English-speaking community in Newcastle, on the other hand, had declined over the years, and consisted mostly of blue-collar workers. As a result, when the school opened to all races, the English medium section was filled mostly by African, Chinese and Indian learners. At the time, a considerable degree of misunderstanding was exhibited by many of the African parents, who wanted to know why their children were being placed in all-black classes. In reality, there were simply not enough other learners to make some of the classes appear integrated in the English medium section of the school. Only a few coloured learners took advantage of the parallel medium Afrikaans section of the school.

Essentially, the pragmatic segregation of the school for the first three years continued as a result of most newcomers choosing English as a language of learning. Only in the two senior years, where classes are dual medium, are learners fully integrated. The headmaster expressed doubts that competence in Afrikaans would be of a sufficiently high standard to sustain the same degree of bilingual versatility in English and Afrikaans in grades 11 and 12, as was the case in the past. He attributed this to a reduced desire on the part of learners in the English section of the school to acquire anything more than a rudimentary proficiency in Afrikaans. Effectively, for the first three years therefore, two schools are housed in the same building.

Language options at the school are limited, with only Afrikaans and English on offer. Questioned about the future of this policy, he confirmed that it was unlikely to change.

[5] The following paragraphs are based on an interview with the principal of Newcastle High School, 4 November 1997.

There had been an attempt to introduce isiZulu from 1994, but as a result of resistance from African parents, it was dropped. Parents were reported to have expressed the view that they particularly wanted their children to speak English. Some had even suggested to the principal that a rule be made that no other language be spoken during school hours – something explicitly disallowed both in *Norms and standards* and in the Constitution. This suggestion had not been followed, as it was known to be contrary to the new Constitution and policy and was seen as a peculiar concept in Afrikaans education.

African parents saw the acquisition of English competence as being an important consideration when choosing a public school for their children. This was not unlike Afrikaans parents who chose the parallel/dual medium option as opposed to the local single medium Afrikaans high school, Amajuba, which, ironically, offers three languages, Afrikaans, English and isiZulu, because it does not have the added cost of running a dual medium system.

The principal described the aspirant Afrikaans-speaking community as very desirous of having children more proficient in English than was possible in schools where Afrikaans was the only language of learning. While white parents desired an indigenous language, they accepted the financial constraint imposed by the complexity of the dual medium bilingual school. He expressed concern that he could lose Afrikaans learners to the Afrikaans medium schools if the integration process did not go smoothly. Effectively, he was referring to a form of white flight: if language policy choices impinged on social relationships, parental choice of high school might be affected. He also mentioned the potential for dual medium private schools to be established and to gain support from wealthier sections of the Afrikaans community.

He elaborated at some length on the issue of loss of learners to other institutions and the consequences for language policy at the school. Already he felt that he had been losing learners to the only other less integrated public dual medium school, which was contesting for the limited pool of learners able to pay the fees that had just been introduced. Further, he envisaged that in the future it might not be possible to sustain the required class sizes for Afrikaans to be offered as a language of learning. While this section of the school was still sizeable and prestigious, grades 7 and 8 were suffering diminishing numbers of learners. He thought the hike in school fees was one reason, as well as natural demographic decline. In turn, the fee burden was a key concern in the provision of additional languages and there had been many suggestions for learning areas other than those concerning language that the governing body wanted to introduce but had been unable to afford.

An unscheduled interview with the head of the language department confirmed the principal's perception that African learners and parents were opposed to the introduction of an official indigenous language. The school had introduced an intensive English programme for learners who arrived unable to take full advantage of English as the language of learning. This was in addition to English first and second language and Afrikaans first and second language. Many learners from the Afrikaans medium section chose to take English as a first language for matriculation, placing even greater demands on the teaching staff. African learners had to take either English

or Afrikaans or an indigenous official language (as private candidates) as a first language to meet the requirements for matriculation.

In a telephone interview with a member of the governing body conducted prior to the interviews and focus groups on site, the member spoke very much in favour of the parallel/dual medium policy of the school and the linguistic competence and 'bilingualism' in English and Afrikaans it had produced in his own children.[6] When questioned about the introduction of other languages into the curriculum, such as isiZulu or foreign languages, the member explained that the school had historically taught German as a foreign language. However, the fall in learner numbers choosing this learning area forced the school to abandon it and learners now have to take it as private candidates. He expressed the view that it would be good to have other languages on offer but given the aborted attempt to introduce isiZulu and the prevailing view amongst parents, this was not likely to occur.[7] The chairman of the school governing body, Dr Steven Zulu, also supported the current language policy as the only practical solution given the current composition of the school.[8] Clearly, stages in decision-making will occur, depending on changing demography and representation in school governance.

The teachers in the focus group (none of whom was familiar with the details of the *Norms and standards* document) believed that the recent policy adopted by the governing body should be carried forward. They unanimously reiterated the opinion that learners and their parents did not desire an indigenous language, citing the eclipsing of German as a learning area as an example. The school remained committed to offering the bilingual education it had developed over the century of its existence. In addition, the school had a boarding establishment and because not all the African learners spoke isiZulu they might not want isiZulu to be the first option of indigenous languages. The reason given was that the provisioning of the school to offer two languages, Afrikaans and English, at two levels in a parallel/dual medium environment, together with the special provisioning needed for learners transferring to English as a medium of instruction from township schools, created a situation where the staffing levels for language teaching absorbed a large proportion of the school's budget. This meant that, as a parallel/dual medium school, they were less able to foster language diversity than single medium schools, if they were to retain this as their key language policy. When questioned about the possibility of schools in the district sharing language teachers, as permitted in the norms and standards document, they saw some possibilities but were, in essence, sceptical given the present demands of their context.[9]

Two interviews conducted with the learner representatives on the governing body of the school, one from the Afrikaans medium section of the school and the other from the English medium section, produced a very different perspective. Contrary to the united opinion of parental governing body members and teachers, both learner

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6 Telephonic interview with executive member, Newcastle High School governing body, 21 October 1997.

7 Interview with executive member, Newcastle High School governing body, 21 October 1997.

8 Telephonic interview with chairperson of the governing body (also regional director in the education department), 21 October 1997.

9 Focus group with language teachers, Newcastle High School, 4 November 1997.

representatives expressed the belief that an African language like isiZulu should be available, and both expressed a desire to learn one. Both the representatives were white female learners, voted in by a majority of African, Indian and Chinese learners. The Afrikaans-speaking representative felt that the school was organised in the interests of Afrikaans-speaking learners, who were largely affluent and socially well-organised and an asset to the life of the school, but that a greater diversity of cultural and social interests in the curriculum was needed to meet the changing times. She said that she would support such a change in the governing body decision when language policy was formalised. Both learner representatives added, however, that finance could be the determining factor and language *per se* might not be a priority consideration for the governing body or the learners.[10]

Follow-up interviews in the wake of these contradictory positions took place with the principal and some learners. The principal said that the rejection of isiZulu had come as a surprise to those who had advocated it and many were, in principle, in favour of it. The principal invited the researcher to select a number of learners to interview. They produced a variety of opinions. Some adamantly rejected the idea of any African languages being introduced to the school, claiming that this was exactly the type of educational initiative they wished to escape by coming to an integrated environment where they had access to English as the language of learning.

Others had reservations that their own language, seSotho, would be overlooked in the choice of isiZulu as the language on offer, and saw no advantage for themselves in the introduction of isiZulu. Some argued that they would like to have isiZulu available as a first language and to be able to take this as an alternative to Afrikaans. Then they would be able to write English as a second language, thus enabling them to fulfil the language requirements of the matriculation examination more readily. This would make progression through the school easier for some learners.

In the highly complex linguistic context of the school, even Chinese could be made available to learners to fulfil matriculation promotional criteria, as long as it was approved according to the national department's list of foreign languages. More likely, such learners could write Chinese as private candidates, as some are presently doing with German and isiZulu. The point is that any degree of accommodation of diversity would lead to a readjustment of the historically organised parallel and dual medium system.

Newcastle Junior Primary School

One of the main reasons for clustering the research by area was to raise the issue of how high schools took account (or not) of the language policies of their main feeder (primary) schools. It should be noted that the notion of 'feeder schools' is not raised in any of the schools acts or other constitutional provisions; the concept is not held to be salient. Yet, *de facto*, the issue is of some importance. The language policies of one of the main feeder schools to Newcastle High are potentially more controversial than those of the high school itself.[11]

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10 Interview, learner representatives on governing body, Newcastle High School, 5 November 1997.

11 Interview, executive member of governing body, Newcastle High School, 5 November 1997.

As with Newcastle High, Newcastle Junior Primary has continued to be a parallel medium school. The principal explained that the school drew on a similar social profile of learners to that of the high school: Indian, Chinese, African and various others who chose English as their language of learning. She reported a decline in the number of learners entering the Afrikaans medium classes; a flight was evident to Afrikaans medium schools. She voiced some concern about the long-term survival of this type of school.

The school has a year zero crèche attached, which allows many children to gain sufficient proficiency in English to proceed. When initially opened to all races, the school tested English language proficiency for entry, but as that was no longer allowed, had stopped doing so. She said this had resulted in a difficult situation for teachers who had to face the challenge of children who had no English at all, and who had to be taught enough English to cope. She related the story of an Afrikaans-speaking couple who insisted on their son choosing English as a language of learning; after psychological assessment he was transferred to the Afrikaans medium section, where he was better able to cope.

As isiZulu is not a language of learning at the school, African children in a similar position do not have a similar option. The principal claimed that the children from non-English speaking homes were generally sent by their parents to crèches where enough English could be learnt. However, she said that an increasing number who had not had the benefits of an English-speaking or multilingual crèche could be expected to enter the school in future. The governing body had no intention of introducing isiZulu as an initial language of learning, as it was available in township schools up to grade 3. Moreover, the parents of African children had expressed the specific desire that the language of learning should be English and did not wish isiZulu to be introduced.

This will be recognised as a similar dilemma to that of introducing isiZulu as a learning area at Newcastle High, except it is compounded here by the issue of the desirable language medium for initial literacy. Again, however, the principal pointed out that there would be great difficulty in funding three languages, a position on which the governing body concurred.[12]

The focus group with the entire teaching staff produced an interesting discussion, with very strong views expressed. Teachers felt that many parents were doing their children a disservice by insisting they be educated in English and that they were severely disadvantaged by not having access to mother tongue initial literacy: this went against the teachers' better judgement from an educational perspective. The teachers said that they were aware that parents desired their children to be taught in English, and erroneously believed that although the first few years would be difficult for them, the ultimate acquisition of English would be more effectively achieved in this environment. The teachers were adamant about the predicament they felt themselves to be in, pointing to the example of the Afrikaans boy mentioned by the principal. They expressed the belief that many of the children entering the school were in precisely the same position, and the English language enrichment initiatives they

[12] Interview, principal, Newcastle Junior Primary School, 5 November 1997.

undertook, while they made a difference, did not adequately deal with what they believed to be a fundamentally wrong educational approach.

When the suggestion of providing initial literacy in indigenous languages was raised, the teachers argued that the parents would not support such an initiative and the costs of adding a third language to the staffing budget would be too great. As in the high school, staff opinion was unanimous: while they felt they continued to offer their best professional service, the context was not educationally ideal. However, the present language policy of a parallel medium school was the only one they would recommend. They cited the example of most of the Chinese learners, who were exposed to English at the crèche stage and so were able to adapt readily to English as a language of learning.

Asked what recommendations they would make for an ideal language policy, they said they would not alter the present one but would strongly advise parents to consider the interests of their children. Essentially, this group strongly advocated initial mother-tongue literacy and, in the absence of substantial development of the language of learning prior to school entry, thought parents were best advised to seek a more appropriate school. They felt that removing language testing was not educationally justified. In short, they were prepared to accept and work with the new context although they saw it as unsatisfactory.[13]

Lower South Coast/Umzimkhulu area

The cluster from Port Shepstone through to Matatiele, but more specifically the Umzimkhulu area, lies in a complex social and political corridor of provincial border disputes between the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal (in part, the legacy of the old Transkei bantustan). It is also near to the Lesotho national border.

Kokstad College

In the smaller towns of the region, rapid demographic change has been accentuated: they exhibit more readily the reduction of the minority populations that were historically dominant or in relatively privileged social positions, and the changes in schools have been correspondingly far more rapid than in Newcastle. Kokstad College, for example, has undergone a radical transition. The school, previously called Grenswag, changed its name to Kokstad College in 1996 and amalgamated with the only English high school in Kokstad which, in turn, ceased to exist. In an interview, the principal explained how, over a period of three years, the school had changed from a single medium, all-white Afrikaans school, to a parallel/dual medium, racially integrated school. What followed was rapid reduction in its Afrikaans section, which necessitated the amalgamation of grades in order to deliver Afrikaans medium tuition. Afrikaans-speaking learners had gone to boarding schools in Pietermaritzburg, the nearest town where a single language of learning was on offer. The principal was also concerned about the loss of learners to the neighbouring town of Matatiele.

The boarding establishment has Africanised rapidly and is peopled by learners from the Eastern Cape. Most of the learners at the school are from the Eastern Cape, and the

[13] Focus group with teachers, Newcastle Junior Primary School, 5 November 1997.

majority language amongst them is isiXhosa. The school offers only English and Afrikaans. Here again, the principal reported no requests from parents for the introduction of isiXhosa and although learners could write as private candidates, there was no intention to introduce it. The governing body consisted mainly of local representatives, as people were not able to travel from the Eastern Cape: he said it seemed to be a feature of boarding establishments that parental contribution to governance was limited by physical distance. He was, however, certain that there was no expressed desire to introduce isiXhosa, the prime interest of the parents being access to English. He went as far as stating that the parents were expressly opposed to the introduction of any indigenous language.[14]

Once again, the principal pointed to a situation where the parallel/dual medium model of education was finding difficulty in transforming itself with the process of integration. If anything, it was creating a greater degree of segregation, particularly regarding the many Afrikaans learners who had flown in the face of transition. The result was class sizes well below the new *Norms and standards* minimum to continue Afrikaans as a language of learning, unless grades were amalgamated. Like the principals in Newcastle, he was acutely aware that access to the school was now determined by the ability to pay and many communities who previously expected to attend the school would no longer be able to afford the fees. He perceived that Kokstad College now contested with schools from neighbouring towns for fee-paying learners. A great deal of bussing between towns now occurred, in addition to the exodus to areas where Afrikaans single medium schools were constituted on a viable basis.

Focus groups were not possible in this school, but separate interviews with the heads of the English and Afrikaans language departments confirmed the understanding of the principal, that there was no educational demand for the introduction of isiXhosa. Both teachers interviewed reiterated that the present policy should continue, but conceded that the school would find it difficult to retain its parallel/dual medium structure. They did perceive the possibility of introducing isiXhosa as a learning area in the future. They also believed that learners should, in future, have access to second language English and isiXhosa first language and the option of doing Afrikaans, unlike the present situation, where Afrikaans was the only language on offer as a second language and English the only first language. Cooperation between schools in the district could provide learning area language teachers. However, like the teachers in the Newcastle schools, they pointed to the severe financial limitations of adapting the parallel/dual medium model.[15]

Matatiele Primary School

The vice-principal was available for an interview. He explained that Matatiele Primary School is an ex-Griqua community school, which had been a single medium Afrikaans school, then changed to a parallel/dual medium school, offering English and Afrikaans as languages of learning.[16] The school then switched to a single language of learning, English, and is currently phasing out Afrikaans. Learners are offered Afrikaans as a

14 Interview with the principal, Kokstad College, 16 November 1997.
15 Interviews with language teachers, Kokstad College, 16 November 1997.
16 Interview with the vice-principal, Matatiele Primary School, 17 November 1997.

medium of instruction only in the last two grades, 6 and 7. The Afrikaans-speaking section of the Griqua community had taken a decision to switch to English and retain Afrikaans as a learning area. The school offers two languages as learning areas, English (first and second language) and Afrikaans (first and second language). However, the social and linguistic profile of learners has changed dramatically in the last three years, with 55% now speaking either seSotho or isiXhosa, in almost equal numbers. Neither of these two languages is dominant in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, but both are prevalent in the Matatiele/Kokstad district. The vice-principal reported that the parents wanted English as the language of learning, but this was still to be decided formally by the governing body.

Perhaps more complex will be the decision as to which indigenous language to choose as a learning area: isiXhosa or seSotho. Many children come from homes that are bilingual isiXhosa/seSotho. If the school were to offer both, it would be committing itself to providing four languages. None of its teachers is formally trained in isiXhosa or seSotho as historically they have all been drawn from the Griqua community, which is English and Afrikaans speaking.

The formal provision of isiXhosa or seSotho would thus also have staffing implications at a time when the school faces possible provincial staff cuts. Depending on requests from parents, the new governing body could facilitate greater language provision. Based on evidence from elsewhere, however, it cannot be assumed that parents will request the provision of even one indigenous language, and they may not necessarily be aware of their rights, or be desirous of exercising them.

The focus group with the teaching staff revealed that they found the new situation very challenging. None of the teachers was able to state definitely which grouping, isiXhosa or seSotho, made up the majority in their school. All but one of the teachers felt incapable of guiding the children in either seSotho or isiXhosa, as their informal acquisition of the languages did not allow them to write and spell them adequately. Contradictory answers were given to the question of which indigenous language they would suggest be introduced, seSotho or isiXhosa. None of them was familiar with *Norms and standards.*

They said that the relationship between language and initial literacy was complex and they found that in some children lack of competence in the language of learning, English, inhibited their ability to display their knowledge. They believed that parents did not desire the introduction of an indigenous language for the purposes of initial literacy, and expressed concern about whether parents were making the right educational choice for their children. However, they stated that the reason for the prestige and popularity of the school, as opposed to surrounding country schools that offered isiXhosa and seSotho, was that it offered English as the language of learning. They reported considerable competition for places at the school, despite the introduction of school fees, and were facing teacher-learner ratios of 1:45.[17]

[17] They also reported that language had recently been used by the police as a way of identifying Lesotho nationals – possibly to root out 'illegal aliens'.

Asked for their perceptions of an ideal language policy, they felt that the *status quo* should be retained, as the cost of a third language would be too great for the school to bear. In addition, it would not address the problem of that proportion of learners whose language could not be included, either seSotho or isiXhosa, depending on which language was chosen. They saw possibilities in sharing language learning area teachers between schools in the district in order to enable both isiXhosa and seSotho to be introduced as learning areas. Their views on possible solutions differed, but there was unanimity of belief that it would be best to retain English, both for purposes of initial literacy and as the language of learning.[18]

Hoërskool Suidkus

The principal at Suidkus gave an account of how the school had been established as a parallel/dual medium English and Afrikaans commercial high school which, over time, changed to a single medium Afrikaans academic high school. It then became a 'Model C' high school and switched back to parallel medium. From 1998, however, it decided to return to Afrikaans single medium, and had begun phasing out the parallel medium section of the school.

The recent changes have come about for a number of reasons. The first was an increase in the Afrikaans-speaking population in the area and the closure of other Afrikaans schools. Secondly, there were difficulties in sustaining parallel/dual medium schools; the principal perceived them as simply too expensive to run. He admitted he had hoped to gain English-speaking learners from another local high school that had been rapidly integrating, but this had failed to happen. He attributed the increase in Afrikaans learners to adverse economic conditions in Gauteng and the flight of Afrikaans-speaking children to the coast to live with retired grandparents. However, he was uncertain as to whether the school could sustain the requisite numbers, in accordance with *Norms and standards,* in the longer term. The school's decision to become single medium had been taken in anticipation of schools being compelled to become parallel/dual medium under the new dispensation, although the new provisions did allow for single medium schools. By amalgamating primary and secondary schools in Port Shepstone, it was hoped that the necessary criterion of learner numbers for single medium institutions would be met.

The school was reported to be struggling financially and setting a school fee had proved difficult; he anticipated a bad debt of anything up to 50%. This placed strain on the budget and the school had been unable to afford to sustain a parallel/dual medium system, let alone introduce other languages. When the school had gone parallel medium under 'Model C' conditions and offered English as a language of learning, the English medium section of the school had integrated rapidly. He did not now expect this to continue, as few applications had been received from African parents for Afrikaans medium instruction. Those who had attempted it had invariably been unsuccessful, as he claimed that Afrikaans competency in the region's primary schools did not meet the needs of high school learning in Afrikaans. He noted too, that Afrikaans was steadily being dropped as a language in the majority of primary schools.[19]

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18 Focus group of teachers, Matatiele Primary School, 17 November 1997.

19. Interview with principal, Hoërskool Suidkus, 19 November 1997.

The principal saw possibilities for the introduction of isiZulu as a third language option when the school was fully single medium, and thought that it might be possible to sustain district level cooperation between schools for the purpose of offering languages as learning areas. The governing body still has to formalise a language policy and it would then seek approval from the province for its status as a single medium school.

The focus group of language teachers was interesting, as their professional interests were directly under threat. The changing nature of language policy and numbers of learners deeply affected their status. Many of the language teachers were already contract employees to the governing body or the province and uncertain of their professional futures. Opinion was divided on the notion of future policy. Some would have liked to see the school continue as a parallel/dual medium school catering for an enlarging constituency of learners requesting English as a language of learning. They felt unsure of the sustainability of a single medium school. The opinions of this section were, by their own admission, linked to their sense of employment prospects and the difficulties facing the language teaching profession in a climate of uncertainty and rapid change in school language policy. They all agreed that the inclusion of indigenous languages was desirable, but pointed to the financial difficulties of such a move, although they felt there could be cooperation between schools in the Port Shepstone district to solve problems of the provision of languages as learning areas.[20]

Port Shepstone High School

Port Shepstone High School is a large, prestigious secondary school and the most expensive public school in the district. It is historically an English medium school, offering Afrikaans as a second language. It caters for an English-speaking community, as well as a variety of other linguistic communities seeking a school in which English is the language of learning. The school has rapidly attracted a majority of African learners, who generally speak isiXhosa and isiZulu. The diminishing demography of both white and Indian learners has been pronounced, according to the principal. Unlike many other public schools, integration of staffing has begun. The school has a boarding establishment that attracts learners from the Eastern Cape, where there is a shortage of secondary schools.

The principal explained that the governing body had made changes to the school's language policy at its own cost, in the interests of the changing population of learners with diversifying needs. The first significant one was to offer English as a second language and isiZulu as a first language and to budget for, and employ, the necessary teachers at the governing body's expense. IsiZulu was introduced primarily to cater for second language English speakers who were disadvantaged by having to write English as a first language to satisfy the requirements of the matriculation exam, that one of the languages be an official language passed at first language level. Learners wishing to study isiZulu as a second language have to attend the first language classes in Zulu and write the appropriate second language paper. Afrikaans continues to be offered as a second language.

[20] Focus group of language teachers, Hoërskool Suidkus, 19 November 1997.

The principal and the governing body felt that the new arrangement was more appropriate for those who had become the majority of learners. This did not resolve the situation totally, however, as many of the learners studying isiZulu would have learnt isiXhosa at primary school. The principal said that there had been a slight drop in the number of learners from the Eastern Cape. This was due firstly to the ending of the subsidy to the boarding establishment, which made it very expensive and secondly, and more significantly, as a result of local pressure for access and a concern over which zone the school was supposed to be servicing. Port Shepstone has a majority of isiZulu-speakers, with an isiXhosa-speaking minority. While the two languages are often mutually intelligible, educational transfer at mid-secondary school level could make it difficult for the learner to cope with the demands and differences of written isiZulu at first language level. The school therefore allows learners to write isiXhosa exams as private candidates. The principal felt the language policy fitted the specific needs and demands of a changing context. He was aware of a potential need to accommodate isiXhosa, but there had been no specific request for this as yet. The school could not afford the expenditure entailed at this point, even though the number of isiXhosa-speaking learners would probably satisfy the *Norms and standards* criteria for the school to offer isiXhosa as a subject.[21]

The focus group with the teachers proved interesting, as the school was the most innovative of all those studied. The language teachers fully approved of the new initiative of providing a second language. For example, the head of the English first language department expressed a sense of relief at no longer having unrealistic standards and educational goals since a second language English teacher had been appointed. The isiZulu teacher accommodated second language learners by integrating them with first language learners. While not ideal, this did, at least, offer the possibility for learners to study isiZulu. More importantly, it satisfied the needs of learners faced with having to obtain matriculation passes.

There was a degree of confusion as to whether Afrikaans was compulsory or not. Many learners of differing linguistic backgrounds chose Afrikaans as opposed to isiZulu, as it was offered and taught as a second language learning area. Consequently, some teachers were under the impression that Afrikaans was still compulsory. In fact, it transpired that this was simply a result of it being perceived as easier; it has a long tradition of second language delivery and teaching methodology, which helps to make it accessible. For example, speakers of isiZulu would choose Afrikaans as a first language and sit the isiZulu exams as second language candidates simply to increase their repertoire of languages.

There are very few Afrikaans-speaking learners at the school. Afrikaans continues to be offered as it is considered a significant language in South Africa, even if not specifically to the area and the school. The group felt that isiXhosa could be introduced as a learning area but that the financial constraints of having four languages available had to be considered.[22]

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21 Interview with acting principal, Port Shepstone High School, 20 November 1997.

22 Focus group with language teachers, Port Shepstone High School, 20 November 1997.

Port Shepstone Junior Primary School

According to the principal, this school had been a parallel/dual medium school until the integration of schools in the area. When the decision was made to amalgamate the Afrikaans schools and consolidate the Afrikaans single medium initiative in Port Shepstone, Port Shepstone Junior Primary had adopted English as a language of learning with Afrikaans and isiZulu as learning areas. Many of the teachers had gone on courses designed for second language learners. Previously a feeder school for Hoërskool Suidkus, it is now a feeder school for Port Shepstone High, via a senior primary school whose language of learning is also English.

The school attracts both isiXhosa- and isiZulu-speaking learners, and a minority of English-speakers. The principal found that most of the African parents choosing to send their children to the school were specifically seeking a school where English was the language of learning. The school staff is not integrated at this point in time. As the school had rapidly Africanised, the isiZulu second language initiative that had previously been offered in the predominantly white environment was no longer adequate. The new situation demanded greater competency in isiZulu. The principal experienced the same pressure from the community as Port Shepstone High, that is, in the first instance to serve the needs of the residents of Port Shepstone in admitting learners. She had found that there was immense pressure from residents of the Eastern Cape to relocate relatives to the Port Shepstone area to take advantage of the educational opportunities. The schools in the district often meet to discuss district policy but have yet to cooperate in the field of language teaching and learning.[23]

The focus group revealed that the teachers of the junior primary were supportive of the recent changes in their language policy. All the teachers expressed a considerable sense of loss about the closure of the Afrikaans section of the school, which had long been parallel medium. There were distinctly mixed feelings about the lost opportunity to accommodate a school model that would have satisfied all language communities in the area. The teachers had serious misgivings about the consolidation of the Afrikaans medium schools, but the guaranteeing of such institutions in the Constitution had created the conditions that allowed this to occur. Most of the teachers were white, English-speakers, and all supported the idea of isiZulu being taught as a learning area and felt the need for a greater degree of competence. Some of the teachers were fluent isiZulu-speakers but had no formal skills and were unable to deal adequately with written skills in the language. Like the teachers in Matatiele, however, they found their oral skill invaluable in offering translation and guidance for their learners. In the discussion, the principal felt that they needed to integrate the staff in order to offer a fuller, more competent isiZulu initiative; this could only come about with staffing changes. There were as yet no demands for isiXhosa as a learning area in the junior primary.[24]

There was awareness amongst the teachers of the strong demand for initial literacy in English, and they did not have particular misgivings about this. They knew that they were a sought-after institution, offering a highly desirable education. This was unlike Newcastle, where the teachers felt they were involved in an educationally unsound

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23 Interview with principal, Port Shepstone Junior Primary School, 24 November 1997.

24 Focus group of teachers, Port Shepstone Junior Primary School, 24 November 1997.

choice. The teachers here felt the crèches in the town provided sufficient multilingual environments for children to acquire English. They were sensitive to the issue that language choice ignored the isiXhosa learners' needs, but felt that these learners did not place great store on the question of linguistic identity where English was the language of learning. They were aware that competition for entry between local learners and those from outside, mainly the Eastern Cape, might assume ethnic dimensions, and that this should be avoided. There was no specific advocacy on language policy beyond the most recent decisions of the governing body and a need to improve the offerings for isiZulu as a learning area.

Durban Schools

Greenbury High School

This school is situated in the predominantly Indian area of Phoenix, adjacent to the township of KwaMashu. The school has drawn on a diverse community of learners for some time. According to the principal, its language policy is to offer English as a first language only and to offer Afrikaans as a second language, a continuation of past language policies. The school population has changed considerably, particularly in the increase of isiZulu-speaking learners. The principal felt that there was no demand to introduce isiZulu and that the cost would be prohibitive. The staff of the school is not integrated and consists entirely of Indian teachers. He envisaged no change in language policy, except perhaps to introduce an Indian language, which had been taught in the local primary schools for some years but not at Greenbury High. The governing body, like all the others, has yet to formalise a language policy in accordance with the *Norms and standards* document.[25]

In the focus group, the language teachers felt that there was no need to offer English as a second language. They believed that the standards attained in first language English were socially and educationally advantageous to the learners. Most of the learners wrote English as a first language and Afrikaans as a second language for their matric certificates. The introduction of second language isiZulu was not thought to be as important as offering Afrikaans. The idea of offering isiZulu as a first language was unacceptable to all but a few dissenting language teachers. The argument was that it was unnecessary, as most of the learners come to the school specifically to learn English.

Teachers added that the school would not be able to finance any language teaching innovations by raising fees. The province should fund any necessary changes. There was support for the maintenance of the current *status quo,* since they saw little in the way of significant future demographic change in the composition of the school. They believed that they would continue to draw on a minority African population, largely resident in Phoenix and sufficiently communicative in, and desirous of learning, English as a first language, having become used to it as a language of learning in primary school.[26]

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[25] Interview with principal, Greenbury High School, 26 November 1997.

[26] Focus group with language teachers, Greenbury High School, 26 November 1997.

Duffs Road Primary School

This primary school is in another predominantly Indian suburb directly adjacent to KwaMashu township. The principal explained that the school offers English as a language of learning, together with Afrikaans and Hindi as learning areas. The school had undergone a very considerable transition in the nature of its learners in the last three years. They are now 70% isiZulu-speaking, and are still taught initial literacy in English. The teaching staff is still drawn from the Indian community.

The governing body has not yet decided on a formal language policy but the principal anticipated no changes to the existing policy in the immediate future. The governing body supports the idea of English as the language of learning, many of the parents having chosen Duffs Road Primary over the local township primary schools precisely so that their children could receive the benefit of learning through the medium of English. There was no immediate desire to introduce isiZulu; the principal stated that many of the isiZulu-speaking children excelled at Hindi. Hindi teaching was organised by the province on a part-time basis and had been introduced in the 1980s, when the school served only the Indian community in Duffs Road. Despite demographic change and the opening of schools to all races, the language policy at the school has simply continued from the previous era.

The focus group discussion with the teachers concentrated on the difficulties they had experienced with learners who had to adapt to a language of learning that was new to them. They felt that, excepting a few cases, the process of adapting to English as the language of learning had been successful. Some suggested that the educational process was now simply longer and slower in the initial phase. The teachers felt that their school's language policy was adequate and that there was no need to introduce isiZulu either as a language of learning or as a learning area. They were proud of the fact that the best Hindi scholars were often isiZulu-speaking learners. There was one dissenting voice, a teacher who believed that the staff should be integrated and that isiZulu should at least be offered as a learning area. Generally the staff felt that the school was effective and sought-after by parents because English was the language of learning.

Mqhawe High School

This school is on the north-western fringes of Inanda, a vast informal settlement beyond Phoenix. The head of the language department was interviewed. He explained that the school draws mainly on isiZulu-speaking learners. Its policy is to offer English as the language of learning, both Afrikaans and English second language, and Zulu as a first language. Afrikaans is being phased out, as the surrounding primary schools no longer teach it. The school is a popular one, although recently it has been losing learners to the former Indian high schools in Phoenix, some of which now have a majority of African learners.

In a focus group discussion with the language teachers, they were asked about their perceptions of an ideal language policy for the school. The head of the language department (who was also the isiZulu teacher) said he believed that it would be possible to develop isiZulu as a language of learning throughout the school system, as had been done in the previous era for Afrikaans. He believed that the language could be developed for the teaching of all learning areas, and that there were educational

advantages to this approach. English could be taught as a learning area, as in Afrikaans single medium schools. He admitted that there would be staff disagreement on such an initiative; however, he felt that the present system of using English disadvantaged many learners. He claimed that he saw no reason for the teaching of any South African languages other than English and isiZulu in their context. The teachers in this focus group supported the dropping of Afrikaans as an inevitable change.[27]

Umbumbulu College of Education

In order to get an overview of possible trends in language policy changes in township primary schools, a focus group was conducted with lecturers in the language department of the Umbumbulu College of Education. This department is well placed to detect changes in language policy as a result of its teacher placement programme and regular contact with primary schools that teach isiZulu as an initial language of learning. Staff perceptions were that there was a considerable exodus to crèches and schools where English was the language of learning. They confirmed a general tendency to discontinue the teaching of Afrikaans. This had, in a few cases, prompted some primary schools which previously offered isiZulu as a language of initial learning to consider switching to English as a language of learning in order to retain their learners because many parents thought this would be educationally advantageous. This was not a general trend, they said, but there were a few schools considering this option.

The lecturers had a strong sense that the educational system was stratifying on the basis of class, and that English language assimilation and education was the key cultural manifestation of this phenomenon. The exodus to schools outside of the township by what the staff described as largely middle class parents, was changing the nature of, and commitment to, schooling in the townships. They had observed, for example, that many teachers sought schools for their children in which English was the language of learning, a tendency which had become noticeable to people generally in these communities. They themselves sent their children to integrated public or private schools where the language of learning was English.[28]

Manor Gardens Primary School

This school is typical of formerly white suburban schools in Durban: rapidly integrating, with an even distribution of English- and isiZulu-speaking children. In an interview, once again the principal said that the governing body had yet to formulate a specific policy in accordance with the current legislation. Current practice is to offer English as the language of learning, isiZulu as a first or second language, and Afrikaans as a second language to all learners: although one of the second languages is technically optional, all learners study all three. The language teachers are specialists, unlike at the other schools surveyed, and are employed directly by the governing body. This inevitably adds to the school's fees.

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[27] Focus group with language teachers, Mqhawe High School, 22 November 1997.

[28] Focus group with language area of learning lecturers, Umbumbulu College of Education, 30 November 1997.

The decision to have a specialist Afrikaans teacher had been taken many years previously, as the competence of the local Durban teachers, even with training, was limited by minimal contact with Afrikaans speakers. Not all the learners who speak indigenous languages are isiZulu-speaking; a few speak isiXhosa or seSotho. The Zulu second language classes, introduced more recently, were initially aimed at English-speaking learners. The staffing had integrated to a small degree, with a part-time Zulu teacher to supplement the teaching of isiZulu by the regular specialist second language teacher. First language isiZulu speakers taking Zulu as a learning area are offered courses that satisfied their different levels of ability. The principal pointed out that many learners who are not first language English speakers would have attended a multilingual crèche and are sufficiently familiar with English to cope with it as the medium of instruction.

The focus group with the staff showed general support for the school's language policy since it had the advantage of learners being able to choose between two additional languages, so as to carry either one forward into high school. They believed the governing body would endorse the present policies. They did not feel that the school should consider offering isiZulu as an initial language of learning, even though they were aware that demographic change over the next few years could readily result in the majority of learners being isiZulu-speaking. As with all the other teachers interviewed, they were not conversant with the *Norms and standards* document. The general perception was that all learners had to study two languages other than English. The fact that this is now legally optional was not understood.

The Internet Survey

In the experimental Internet survey, a number of the tendencies established in the research conducted in the schools described above were confirmed as occurring at national level. Interestingly, the trend indicated by the Umbumbulu lecturers, of some primary schools that had previously offered an indigenous language as a language of learning to switch to English as a language of learning, was confirmed in other parts of the country. There had been attempts to introduce indigenous languages as *second* languages, but these had failed for want of takers. A similar lack of knowledge of official policy was either evident or candidly expressed in replies from schools. The most elaborate range of language options on offer came from private schools, which frequently offered courses in up to four languages, usually three official South African languages and a foreign language such as French. One private school canvassed offered all four at a number of levels.[29]

[29] Email correspondence using the SA Schools Network on the Internet, October 1997. This technique shows definite possibilities for research when there is a wider connectivity. Communication is generally mediated by the webmasters of the schools' computer centres. Some principals answered directly, however.

KEY ISSUES RAISED ON LANGUAGE POLICY

As noted at the outset, the research was clustered into groupings of schools in the same or proximate districts. Across all of them, however, can be seen rapidly changing environments where language policies have changed up to three times in a few years. Although democratically elected, most of the schools' governing bodies remain minority controlled: the governing bodies and their teacher representatives are generally drawn from the communities of the previously segregated schools, while the majority of learners and parents may already be from different language groups.

Newcastle High, Kokstad College, Hoërskool Suidkus and Port Shepstone Primary School all attest to the difficulties of sustaining the model of two languages of learning (Brown, 1997a). This is ironic, as the only language teaching initiative approaching 'additive' bilingualism as aspired to in *Norms and standards* is probably the parallel/dual medium model. With the considerable logistic difficulties of extending language learning beyond two languages in this model, the old language *status quo* is likely to be reinforced. Such a choice by a governing body is quite possible under the *Norms and standards* policy which, as we have seen, includes bilingualism and dual medium schools within the definition of multilingualism. There is no compulsion to offer or choose indigenous languages in *Norms and standards*.

There is, however, a further irony: a smaller number of schools that offer Afrikaans as the only language of learning have been able to consolidate themselves in a way that has effectively insulated the Afrikaans-speaking community from the rapid integration taking place in the educational system alluded to above. The effect of the eleventh-hour decision to permit schools to offer a single language of learning as a substantive educational right in the Bill of Rights has led to *de facto* segregation in schools where Afrikaans is a language of learning, since there is very little demand from speakers of indigenous languages for Afrikaans as a language of learning.

What have also become evident are conflicting demands on resources and the allocation of resources to change or maintain the cultural orientation of the school as an institution. On the one hand, there is an obvious desire for English as a language of learning. On the other, there is historical resistance to English as the language of learning in Afrikaans communities. In essence this produces a contradictory response to the question of the role of English as a language of learning. In the Afrikaans community, growing avoidance is expressed in the consolidation of single medium Afrikaans schools – creating pressure on the Afrikaans sections of parallel/dual medium schools. A complete conversion to English as a language of learning by Afrikaans learners was evident in only very few cases. What could accelerate this trend would be the growing inaccessibility of Afrikaans medium schools in remote areas, whose boarding establishments would have to become prohibitively expensive. Language maintenance options would then become the preserve of the well off.

In contrast, while there was fervent belief in some focus groups that English as a language of learning should be replaced by an indigenous language beyond the first three grades, there was no evidence of practical educational initiative or *ad hoc* policy to this effect, unlike the case of Afrikaans. At this point in history, the development of

indigenous languages as fully developed languages of learning remains an aspiration only. This is an indication of the dichotomy between aspiration and context: at the same time that multilingual opportunities are expanding in some schools, others continue to display comparative cultural uniformity based on specific linguistic identity. In fact, in township schools in KwaZulu-Natal a diminishing number of languages are now available. Mqhawe High, for example, once offered three languages but now offers only two.

Norms and standards accommodates these opposing aspirations by allowing freedom of choice. Language communities can retain a historical resistance to, or be absorbed into, a hegemonic English language educational context. This does not only relate to the dominant language, English, but also to area factors linked to indigenous languages. The choice between indigenous languages is also fraught with implications of domination and subordination, as Matatiele Primary School's possible future choice between seSotho and isiXhosa suggests. Police investigation of the Sotho learners' nationality shows starkly how languages can identify people and make institutions more or less accessible (see footnote 17).

The growing perception and demarcation of schools as belonging to certain areas could be connected to governing bodies' choice of specific indigenous languages and may constitute legitimate but subtle exclusionary educational practice in certain conditions. Examples are Port Shepstone High and Junior Primary and their offering of isiZulu and, more specifically, the decision of the high school to offer isiZulu as a first language learning area only. In reality, what is emerging is a new sense of the demarcation of social identity in relation to ethnic and language groupings in an area on the part of those who feel entitled to define the cultural identity of a school and choose the languages it offers. In consequence, those who may and may not enter and be accommodated within the institution are also defined. None of the focus groups mentioned issues such as the relationship between language and dialect and its effect on learners, even though, for example, a significant dialect, siBaca, was spoken in the Kokstad and Port Shepstone areas. The defining of languages in the context of professional language teaching is linked to the officially recognised grouping with a recognised and supported written form as defined in the Constitution.

The slow pace of professional and governance responses to demographic change among learners should be a matter of some concern. The slowness of integration of the language teaching profession was evident in all the schools. For pragmatic reasons, this cannot occur at the same pace as changes in the learner population; even so, little progress had been made. Integration of staffing would obviously allow for schools, particularly primary schools, to make appointments from a pool of teachers with a wider range of language skills. District cooperation, as suggested in *Norms and standards*, which could allow for a degree of flexibility in language teaching, has not been mooted in any of the districts although all teachers saw it as providing a possible solution. Meeting learner needs with a cadre of adequately trained language teachers will present educational institutions with considerable challenges and limitations, both financial and social (Gough, 1997).

Similarly, in most of the schools, representatives on newly formed school governance structures bear little relation to the profiles of the learners. Often, as shown in the

examples above, a minority grouping continues to define a school's language policy despite significant shifts in the composition of the school population. This was clearly the case at Duffs Road Primary School, which continued to offer Hindi in the face of 70% Africanisation. After their first election, governing bodies are in office for a three-year period before new elections are held. In some institutions these three years will see several changes in the languages of the learner population. Changes like this can be expected for some time in South Africa, given the demographic and proportional changes occurring in its youthful population.

On these points, the limitations of *Norms and standards* become apparent. No specific procedures for governing bodies have been suggested, such as mechanisms for testing parental opinion; on the contrary, the competence of governing bodies to decide is assumed. Clearly, making decisions on multilingual language policy in a context of social change and diversity includes responsibility for dealing fairly with communities other than one's own. Linguistic and social complexity of this kind is ubiquitous throughout South Africa, both in urban and rural areas. Close observance of developing practices could suggest ways in which potential conflict could be avoided and in which provincial procedures and district initiatives could be elaborated to improve the quality of language teaching so as to achieve the desired 'additive bilingualism'.

CONCLUSION

This research illustrates the conundrum of contests between indigenous languages and their relationship to the dominant language. In this sense, South African schooling is in no way exceptional in an African context: the colonial language is a critical determinant in the stratification and development of educational institutions in the post-colonial (or, in South Africa, the post-apartheid) period (Laitin, 1992). The differences in the South African situation are, firstly, that the language issue is to be decided democratically and locally, with cumulative social implications that could have far-reaching and, as yet, unpredictable implications for South African language education and educational publishing. Secondly, the future development of indigenous languages will depend on the will and support of their local advocates: there is no single central decision on policy for the whole country as was the case with central language planning in Africa (Brown, 1997a). The formal decisions of the governing bodies must be analysed and quantified ahead of the review of language policy scheduled by the Minister of Education for 1999, which will present an interesting moment for reflection on problems and achievements.

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Appendix 1

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY

14 JULY 1997

The language in education policy documents which follow have been the subject of discussions and debate with a wide range of education stakeholders and role-players. They have also been the subject of formal public comment following their publication on 9 May 1997 (Government Notice No. 383, Vol. 17997).

Two policies are announced herewith, namely, the LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY IN TERMS OF SECTION 3(4)(m) OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT 27 OF 1996), and the NORMS AND STANDARDS REGARDING LANGUAGE POLICY PUBLISHED IN TERMS OF SECTION 6(1) OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT, 1996. While these two policies have different objectives, they complement each other and should at all times be read together rather than separately.

Section 4.4 of the Language in Education Policy relates to the current situation. The new curriculum, which will be implemented from 1998, onwards, will necessitate new measures which will be announced in due course.

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY IN TERMS OF SECTION 3(4)(m) OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT 27 OF 1996)

PREAMBLE

This Language-in-Education Policy Document should be seen as part of a continuous process by which policy for language in education is being developed as part of a national language plan encompassing all sectors of society, including the deaf community. As such, it operates within the following paradigm:

1. In terms of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the government, and thus the Department of Education, recognises that our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset and hence is tasked, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country, including South African Sign Language and the languages referred to in the South African Constitution.
2. The inherited language-in-education policy in South Africa has been fraught with tensions, contradictions and sensitivities, and underpinned by racial and linguistic discrimination. A number of these discriminatory policies have affected either the access of the learners to the education system or their success within it.
3. The new language in education policy is conceived of as an integral and necessary aspect of the new government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa. It is meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be

encouraged.

4. This approach is in line with the fact that both societal and individual multilingualism are the global norm today, especially on the African continent. As such, it assumes that the learning of more than one language should be general practice and principle in our society. That is to say, being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African. It is constructed also to counter any particularistic ethnic chauvinism or separatism through mutual understanding.
5. A wide spectrum of opinions exists as to the locally viable approaches towards multilingual education, ranging from arguments in favour of the cognitive benefits and cost-effectiveness of teaching through one medium (home language) and learning additional language(s) as subjects, to those drawing on comparative international experience demonstrating that, under appropriate conditions, most learners benefit cognitively and emotionally from the type of structured bilingual education found in dual-medium (also known as two-way immersion) programmes. Whichever route is followed, the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence, the Department's position that an additive approach to bilingualism is to be seen as the normal orientation of our language-in-education policy. With regard to the delivery system, policy will progressively be guided by the results of comparative research, both locally and internationally.
6. The right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual. This right has, however, to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism.

This paradigm also presupposes a more fluid relationship between languages and culture than is generally understood in the Eurocentric model which we have inherited in South Africa. It accepts *a priori* that there is no contradiction in a multicultural society between a core of common cultural traits, beliefs, practices, etc., and particular sectional or communal cultures. Indeed, the relationship between the two can and should be mutually reinforcing and, if properly managed, should give rise to and sustain genuine respect for the variability of the communities that constitute our emerging nation.

AIMS

The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in education are:

1. to promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;
2. to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education;
3. to promote and develop all the official languages;
4. to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, including languages used for religious purposes, languages which are important for international trade and communication, and South African Sign Language, as well as Alternative and Augmentative Communication;
5. to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching;
6. to develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages

POLICY: LANGUAGES AS SUBJECTS

All learners shall offer at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 1 and Grade 2.

THE PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

The parent exercises the minor learner's language rights on behalf of the minor learner. Learners who come of age, are hereafter referred to as the learner, which concept will include also the parent in the case of minor learners.

The learner must choose the language of teaching upon application for admission to a particular school.

Where a school uses the language of learning and teaching chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, the school must admit the learner.

Where no school in a school district offers the desired language as a medium of learning and teaching, the learner may request the provincial education department to make provision for instruction in the chosen language, and section 5.3.2 must apply. The provincial education department must make copies of the request available to all schools in the relevant school district.

THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE SCHOOL

Subject to any law dealing with language in education and the Constitutional rights of learners, in determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes, or through other means approved by the head of the provincial education department. (This does not apply to learners who are seriously challenged with regard to language development, intellectual development, as determined by the provincial department of education.)

Where there are less than 40 requests in Grades 1 to 6, or less than 35 requests in Grades 7 to 12 for instruction in a language in a given grade not already offered by a school in a particular school district, the head of the provincial department of education will determine how the needs of those learners will be met, taking into account:

1. the duty of the state and the right of the learners in terms of the Constitution, including
2. the need to achieve equity,
3. the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices,
4. practicability, and
5. the advice of the governing bodies and principals of the public schools concerned.

THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

The provincial education department must keep a register of requests by learners for teaching in a language medium which cannot be accommodated by schools.

In the case of a new school, the governing body of the school in consultation with the relevant provincial authority determines the language policy of the new school in accordance with the regulations promulgated in terms of section 6(1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996.

It is reasonably practicable to provide education in a particular language of learning and teaching if at least 40 in Grades 1 to 6 or 35 in Grades 7 to 12 learners in a particular grade request it in a particular

school.

The provincial department must explore ways and means of sharing scarce human resources. It must also explore ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools and or school districts which cannot be provided with and or offer additional languages of teaching in the home language(s) of learners.

FURTHER STEPS

Any interested learner, or governing body that is dissatisfied with any decision by the head of the provincial department of education, may appeal to the MEC within a period of 60 days.

Any interested learner, or governing body that is dissatisfied with any decision by the MEC, may approach the Pan South African Language Board to give advice on the constitutionality and/or legality of the decision taken, or may dispute the MEC's decision by referring the matter to the Arbitration Foundation of South Africa.

A dispute referred to the Arbitration Foundation of South Africa must be finally resolved in accordance with the Rules of the Arbitration Foundation of Southern Africa by an arbitrator or arbitrators appointed by the Foundation.

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Appendix 2

STATEMENT BY PROF SME BENGU, MINISTER OF EDUCATION ON A NEW LANGUAGE POLICY IN GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION

14 July 1997

1. INTRODUCTION

It is indeed an honour for me to announce a new language policy in education, which is in keeping with the values and principles of our Constitution. This policy has been the subject of discussions and debate with a wide range of education stakeholders and role-players and was further enriched by public comment following its publication, in the form of two documents, on 9 May 1997 (Government Notice No. 383, Vol.17, 1 997)

Two policies are announced herewith, namely, the LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY IN TERMS OF SECTION 3(4)(m) OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT 27 OF 1996), and the NORMS AND STANDARDS REGARDING LANGUAGE POLICY PUBLISHED IN TERMS OF SECTION 6(1) OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT, 1996. While these two policies have different objectives, they complement each other and should at all times be read together rather than separately.

2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

The inherited language-in-education policy in South Africa has been fraught with tensions, contradictions and sensitivities, and underpinned by racial and linguistic discrimination. A number of these discriminatory policies have affected either the access of learners to the education system or their success within it. Our Constitution however recognises cultural diversity as a valuable national asset, and tasks the government, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country.

3. MULTILINGUALISM : LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A NEW NATION AND SOCIETY

The new language in education policy is therefore conceived of as an integral and necessary aspect of the new government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa. It is meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged. This approach is in line with the fact that both societal and individual mutilingualism are the global norm today, especially on the African continent. As such, it assumes that the learning of two or more languages should be general practice and principle in our society. This would certainly counter any particularistic ethnic chauvinism or separatism through mutual understanding. Being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African. You will notice that we have modified our view on multilingualism in the policy itself, where we describe multilingualism as the learning of more than one language rather than more than two languages. This position that multilingualism in South Africa should mean a learner offering more than two languages was strongly argued by significant constituencies, who argued further, that learners who offer English and or Afrikaans should be obliged to offer a historically disadvantaged language. We take the view that there should be no obligation in this regard, but that learners should be encouraged in this direction.

The underlying policy principle in our overarching language policy is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the eftective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence, the Department's position that an additive approach to bi- and multilingualism should be the normal orientation of our language-in-education policy.

Our policy rests upon the right of the learner to choose the language of learning and teaching However, this right must be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism. This paradigm also presupposes a more fluid relationship between languages and culture than is generally understood in the Eurocentric model which we have inherited in South Africa. It accepts a *priori* that there is no contradiction in a multicultural society between a core of common cultural traits, beliefs, practices, etc., and particular sectional or communal cultures. Incleed, the relationship between the two can and should be mutually reinforcing and if properly managed, should give rise to and sustain genuine respect for the variability of the communities that constitute our emerging nation.

4. LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY IN TERMS OF SECTION 3 (4) (m) OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT 27 OF 1996)

Given these overall aims and language principles, let me only draw your attention to the fact that the requirements for offering languages as subjects and as language of learning and instruction, together with their promotion requrements relate to the current National Curriculum. These will be amended as the new National Curriculum is phased in over the next several years.

Let me now turn to the Norms and Standards Regarding Language Policy in terms of the South African Schools Act.

5: NORMS AND STANDARDS REGARDING LANGUAGE POLICY PUBLISHED IN TERMS OF SECTION 6(1) OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT (1996)

The aim of these norms and standards is the promotion, fulfilment and development of the state's overarching language goals in standards education in compliance with the Constitution. Clearly it is these norms and standards which I am announcing today which will offer solutions to the controversy which has raged during the past two school years over access, equity, redress, language, culture and reilgious rights. I want to thank all those who have participated in the discussions aimed at finding solutions to these matters. Those contributions have helped us construct what I believe is a reasonable way forward given the complexity of the issues that we have to confront, and given our responsibility to move our nation from its fractious past into a united future. Let me also note that since the interpretation and implementation of these provisions are likely to provoke controversy, I have taken the unusual decision to formally review this policy during 1999 in order for us to map progress made in this regard.

Let me highlight some aspects of the policy:

1. Learners must choose their language of learning and teaching upon application for admission to a particular school.
2. Where a school uses the language of learning and teaching chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, the school must admit the learner. There can therefore be no basis for refusing a learner access to a school should this provision be met by the learner.

3. However where no school offers the desired language, or where less than forty requests in grades 1 to 6 or less than thirty-five requests in grades 7 to 12 for instruction in a language in a given grade which is not already offered by a school, the head of the provincial department of education will determine how the needs of those learners will be met, taking into account the provisions of the Constitution, and in particular the need to achieve equity, to redress past discriminatory practices, and practicability.

You would have observed that we have thus defined reasonably practicable as the current national norms for school education as they apply to the provision of teachers. This does not absolve the provincial departments of education must providing education for learners where these norms are not yet. In my view, just as strongly should weigh the pursuit of equity, multilingualism and the redress of past language discrimination. In this regard, the provincial department of education must explore ways and means of sharing scarce human and other resources. They must also explore other ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools or school districts which cannot he provided with or offer additional languages of learning and teaching in the home language(s) of learners.

In so far as the practical pursuit of multilingualism is concerned, the policy recognises school governing bodies as the key partner in the pursuit of this goal. In this respect, the policy requires each school governing body to announce the school's language policy, and to state how it will promoted multilingualism through a variety of measures such as offering more than one language of learing and teaching, offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, the use of special immersion or language maintenance programmes, or any other means approved by the head of a provincial department of education.

The policy document also draws the attention of learners and governing bodies to an appeal, a review and an arbitration process, apart from stating the obvious, that is, the right to challenge any actions in regard to this policy in the Constitutional Court.

Lastly, I have requested the Department of Education to launch a national information campaign to back up the announcement of this new language policy, and to develop strategy and action plans with our partners in the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology and the Pan South African Language Board to develop all languages in the pursuit of this new language policy especially those previously disadvantaged under apartheid.

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